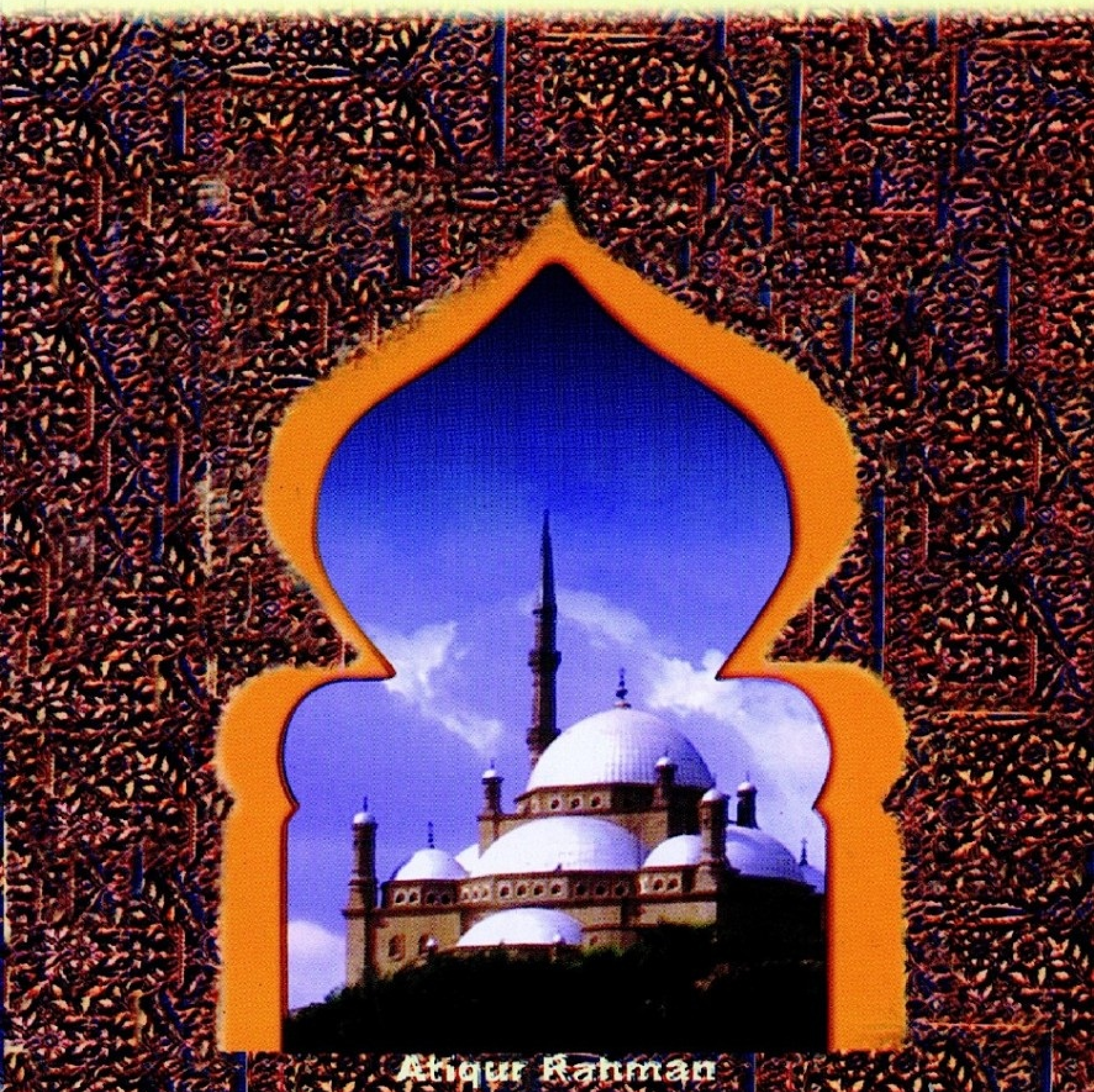
Salât: An Islamic Yoga And Meditation



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Preface

Islam is a complete way of life, which teaches its followers to prepare themselves the methods of acquiring best position not only in this mundane world, but also in the âkhirah i.e. the world-Hereafter. For the betterment of the people, Allâh revealed the Holy Qur'an upon Muhammad (S.A.W.) and made him His Prophet to guide the mankind the exact righteous way. However, the people, who followed him (S.A.W.) were called Muslims, who are supposed to follow all the Commands of Allâh as described in the Qur'an and as taught by the Prophet (S.A.W.).

In the Qur'an, Allâh has mentioned many times the word, 'Aqîmusalât' (Establish Salât [Prayer]). The objectives of establishing this prayer are in abundance, because it is one of the five pillars of Islam; and is replete with several medical and spiritual benefits. Cleanliness, exercise and meditation are the great sources of attaining good health. And Salât is such a prayer, which covers all these essences besides providing a spiritual pleasure to the mussallih (one, who performs Salât).

Though this prayer got its complete form after the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), but it was also applicable to the first man of this earth, Adam (PBUH), who also prostrated to Allâh. Moreover, Allâh ordered Iblis to bow down in reverence to Adam (PBUH), but he disobeyed Allâh and was declared Satân. As the lexical meaning of Salât is to bend the lower back, it clears that this is not only beneficial to get the graces of Allâh, but He has also ascertained some medical benefits in its recita-

tion, movements and positions such as qayam, rukuh, sajidah and jalsah etc.

Various physical exercises were innovated in this world to attain good health and to cure the many diseases arising in daily life. Among all the physical exercises, one of the most effective ones is known as Yoga, which is based on meditation and some physical movements i.e. different âsanas. It got immense popularity, because in many cases, it is considered the substitute of several medicines. And the point to ponder is, that most of the âsanas or movements performed in yoga are very much similar to those of positions and movements performed in Salât. Thus, it seems that yoga is a derivative form of Salât.

Hence, after observing all the aspects of Salât, it appears that Salât is not only an obligatory prayer in Islam, but it is also the best exercise in the form of Islamic yoga and medication, providing good health and curing many diseases at a time. Moreover, some obligatory and voluntary preconditions of Salât such as istinjah, ghusl, meswak and wudhu have also got very important role to maintain the health and hygiene of the mussallih. Thus, the attempt has been here to focus the merits of Salât from yogic and medical points of view in addition to its beneficial preconditions essential for its performance.

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Salât: An Islamic Yoga and Medication

Introduction

The religion of Islam is based on five pillars or principles, which are known as five obligatory prayers of Islam. Salât is one of those five pillars and merits of vital importance among them. It should be performed in all the cases as even a sick person is also supposed to offer Salât though in the ways or postures what he/she is comfortably able to do. It is not merely a prayer as when it is gauged from yogic and medical points of view, it is proved to be one of the best exercises for physical and mental health of the people.

Right from the inception of Islam, health and hygiene have also been the essences of this Faith. As hygiene is one of the indispensable sources of health, Allâh, the Exalted has exhorted the mankind to maintain hygiene by cleaning his body, clothes, surroundings and the purifi-

cation of one's soul i.e. spiritual cleanliness performed by the prayers and meditation as prescribed in Islam. Laying great emphasis on maintenance of cleanliness, the Prophet (S.A.W.) said to his *Ummah* (people):

"Cleanliness (purity) is half of your Imân".

(Hadith)

Another necessary source of health is exercise and sports, which are performed in various ways. Though the Prophet (S.A.W.) inspired the Muslims for riding, swimming and archery (which were the best exercises/sports at the time of the Prophet [S.A.W.]), but it is also an undeniable truth that there are certain obligatory and voluntary prayers in Islam, which themselves are the different important exercises adequately attributable to physical and mental health of human beings. Islam has stipulated and exhorted certain rules and regulations to be followed by its followers. Thus, each action for which emphasis has been laid in this religion is proved to be advantageous for the people. Apart from the obligatory prayers, the prescribed way of walking, talking, sitting, eating and drinking—all the activities performed according to Islamic principles are beneficial for our health.

In addition, as it is also of common knowledge that foods and drinks have got very important place for health. But there is no religion in the world (except Islam), which has so far prescribed in its religious book about what to eat and what not to eat, what to drink and what not to drink. Islam is the only religion, where its Heavenly Book, the Holy Qur'an and the Messenger of Allâh (S.A.W.) have acquainted the Muslims with certain dos' and don'ts in the matter of eating and drinking. And such permissions and

prohibitions are purely meant for the health of the people, who follow them to the best of their practicalities.

Physical relationship also plays a causative role in amelioration and deterioration of human health. If the physical relationship is established in accordance with the relevant principles of Islam, then there is least possibility of falling oneself sick or caught by a disease. In the same way, if it is not performed according to Islam or as per its prescribed procedures, then there are maximum hazards of falling oneself sick or caught by sexual or venereal diseases.

As far as the significance of Salât from health and hygiene point is concerned, it is found that it is not only an obligatory prayer to be performed by the Muslims, but also one of the best physical exercises having similitude with yoga, an exercise based on various *âsanas* (different physical postures).

Thus, in the same way, performance of Salât needs physical movements as described in Islam, which terms to be physical exercise providing adequate circulation of blood into the entire body and giving strength to muscles and bones. There are some mandatory and voluntary preconditions in the matter of offering Salât; and such preconditions are also meant for the health of the persons, who offer this prayer. For example, the place where Salât is going to be performed should be cleaned, the clothes of the mussallih (one, who offer Salât) should also be clean. If he is not found cleaned in all respects as per the preconditions of Salât, he has to take ghusl (bath) before he offers the prayer. And the most important is wudhu (ablution), which must be performed before offering Salât.

As a whole, all the preconditions applicable in offer-

ing the Salât are also related to mussallih's health. The physical movements in Salât plays the most important role in the form of cool and curative exercise, performer of which can very well feel and understand its advantageous aspects.

Though Salât helps in improving the health of mussalih from other medical points, but its similarity with the actions and benefits of Yoga cannot be denied, because the majority of the Yogic *âsanas* including those of *hatha-yoga* are very much similar to the movements performed in Salât.

Relation between Salât and Yoga

The practice of yoga is integrated with the Islamic life, especially the offering of Salât as they assist one another due to similarity in their performances. Islam and yoga together make a mutually beneficial combination. In both, there is emulation of reaching its ultimate goal of spiritual satisfaction and salvation.

A conception is found among certain people that yoga is a religion. A French author named Jean Dechanet linked it to his Catholic faith and authored the book, 'Christian Yoga' (New York: Harper, 1960). Yoga came to be known from the matrix of the Hindu world, whereas in accordance with Mircea Eliade, it is the innovation of pre-Hindu world and can be recollected to prehistoric sorcery. Hence, alike India's other advantages to the world civilization, e.g. the system of place notation, on which all mathematics bank upon, yoga is not linked to the Hindu religion, but it has got a universal recognition. No performance of prayer (other than those of Islamic) in the world resembles with the movements or *âsanas* of yoga as they have got similitude with those of postures and movements in Salât, because it (yoga)

has a particular attachment to Islam that makes for an interesting study and implementation on it.

However, alike other misconceived people, Jean Dechanet ignored the fact, that yoga is a set of techniques and skills that spread and perpetuate the practice of this exercise by following the movements as found in execution of Salât in Islam. From the angle of physical exercise, it is then obvious that Salât is actually an Islamic yoga since the majority of the movements in yoga are followed in the same way as they are executed while offering Salât. Thus, it is better to offer Salât punctually and properly; it will automatically cover the skills of yoga, used in improving one's health and envigouring the physique.

Resemblance of Salât and Yoga; And Their Benefits

Metaphysical dogma

The basic reason of resemblance between Islam and yoga on the top level is the doctrine of metaphysics of Advaita Vedanta, which has got similitude with the first pillar of Islam i.e. *tawheed* (the belief of Oneness of God). All conventional esoterisms have got compatibility with everything visual, having their origin in the Celestial world. The display on the material plane are derived from the ideal domain of prototypes (known as *al-a'y'an al-th'abitah* in the metaphysics of Ibn al-'Arabi). This confined world as manifested is just an indication of the eventual reality, which will regain the form of Supernal origin. Therefore, Advaita Vedanta and Islamic esoteric metaphysics are unanimous with the fact, that God is the Only Truth; and others all are confined, incidental and mortal as the unitary view of truth in Advaita Vedanta agrees with the principle of *tawheed* in Islam.

It can be well compared to the signs of the Prophet's

(S.A.W.) nocturnal journey to the Heaven (*al-Mi'râj*) with the identical signs in yoga. The Prophet (S.A.W.) ascended on al-Burâq, and covered the journey of seven heavens to the divine Throne of Allâh. So, having the similarity with this; in yoga, the *kuNDalini* is a feminine *shakti* (power) that resides at the core of the spine and ascends through seven levels (represented by the seven *cakras*) to the pinnacle of liberation.

Salât and âsanas

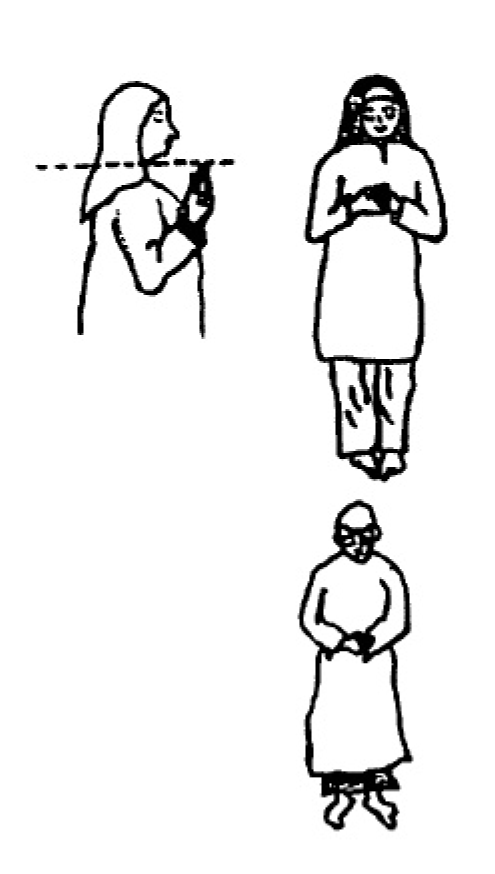
Hatha-yoga (one of the parts of yoga) has got complete resemblance with Salât, in which the physical movements very much resemble with those of yoga *âsanas*. The lexical meaning of the word, Salât is to bend the lower back as it is done in the hatha-yoga. Several postures used in hatha-yoga are very much similar to the postures per-



formed in Salât and those include standing, bowing down, spinal stretches, inverted postures, seated postures and spinal twists. The wisdom of offering Salât is to get embodied all such elementary forms into a compact flowing actions, making a thorough, all-round course of exercises for stable health that can be performed without putting much physical and mental stress; and can be brought into practice even by the common people, who have interest to do so.

Standing posture

TaDasana (The Mountain Pose) of yoga is the base for all standing *âsanas* since the performing person always starts with this and comes back to it at the completion of the standing sequence. It very much resembles with the standing posture of qayâm in Salât. Qayâm in Salât is a placid exercise for the entire body such as feet, legs, and spine functioning together. In such posture, the mussallih keeps his feet firmly on the ground and his head reaching towards the Heaven. This posture is of the best metaphysical significance to the sanctimony of the human state, for perpendicularity is the basic need of Islam.



Spinal stretching

Describing the importance of spine, the yogis (the persons, who perform yoga) say that strength of a man depends upon the strength of his spine as it is done by bringing the head forward to rest on the knees. As all the nerves of the body are channeled from the spinal cord out between the vertebrae, a healthy spine merits much importance for the well being of the entire body and mind.



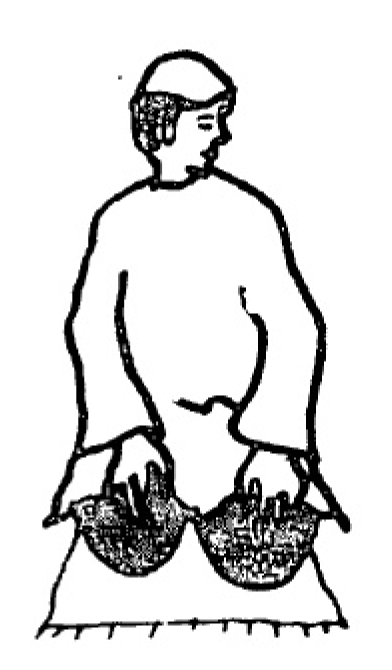
It makes much patient and tenacious practice to make and keep the spine perfectly flexible, and only the most devoted yogis succeed in this exercise.

As the religion of Islam is an invitation to everyone, the Islamic spinal stretch is kept easy and within the accessibility of everyone, who wishes so. The bowing position, when mussallih's head comes parallel to his knees is called *rukuh,* which only needs that individual bend forward adequately to place his hands on his knees. However, this minimal stretch helps in keeping the spine in good condition. The repetition of *rukuh* prepares the spine for sound forward stretches providing it adequate strength.

Inverted poses

Through the circulation of blood all through the veins and arteries, the heart functions most properly and adequately. But the requirement is, that proper exercise is needed for the efficient circulation of blood into the whole body. Especially, raising fresh blood to the brain through the carotid artery and lifting it from the feet back up to the heart is constantly going against the pull of gravity. That is the reason that two of the most vital and helpful *âsanas* are the shoulder-stand (*sarvangâsana,* the 'entire body pose') and the head-stand (*sirSâsana*).





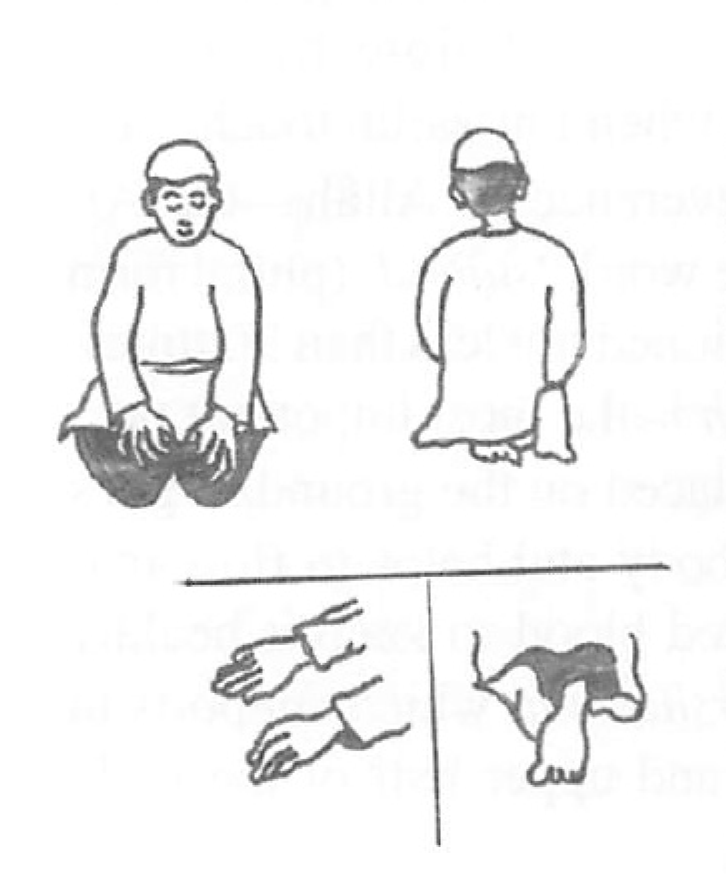
Salât has taken the paramount aspect of these inverted poses i.e. by lowering the head below the heart. This posture is called *sajidah,* when mussallih touches his forehead on the ground in reverence to Allâh—the Almighty. In the Holy Qur'an, the word, *'sujood'* (plural form of the word, *'sajidah'*) is mentioned not less than 90 times. So, from all the angles, *sajidah* is the most important posture of Salât. As the head is placed on the ground, it goes down than other parts of the body and helps to flow into the brain with fresh oxygenated blood to keep it healthy and alert. It is just like half *sirshâsana*, which supports in drawing the blood into brain and upper half of the body

including eyes, ears, nose and lungs. By such function, it helps a lot in discarding one's tiredness with the benefit of freshness of mind at all the times.

In addition, while in *sajidah* posture, mussallih's both hands are kept on the ground near his left and right sides of his head or ears. When he stands from the *sajidah*, he presses his both hands parallel on the ground (which is as per the third law of Newton) and lifts his head and stands up. The perpendicular pressure given by the mussallih's hands on the ground helps him in formation of muscle in the hands and chest; and provides strength in arms, elbows, chest and the wrists as it is very much similar to the physical exercise based on bend and stretch movements.

Same function starts with the benefits of legs, when mussallih stands up from the *sajidah* position, giving pressure on the ground by his toes that helps in formation of muscle in thighs and other parts of his legs.

Sitting postures



The Sanskrit word, *'âsana'* denotes 'seat' as the various yogic exercises performed in sitting postures are given the names of different *âsanas*. The rudimentary postures for meditation are seated ones, particularly the Lotus. The sitting posture of Salât (*Jalsah*) can practically be compared to the Diamond-pose (*vajrâsana*), which is in-

deed, in the minds of both yogis and mussallihs. Comparing with Salât, Swami Shivanand in his book, 'Yoga Asanas' says:

> *"This âsana resembles more or less with the Namâz pose, in which the Muslims sit for prayer".*

Moreover, both *vajrâsana* and *jalsah* seem to be the same as the *zazen* posture of Japan. That's why a mussallih can easily sit for long in *vajrâsana* of yoga. A punctual and regular mussallih can easily sit in yoga postures like the Lotus, because his legs and joints get accustomed to the needs of such exercise.

While sitting in Salât, the mussallih recites *Attahiyât, Darûd sharîf* and then raises straight for a while his right hand's index finger by reciting the words, *'Ashhado-anlâilâha-illallâho-wa-ashhado-annâ-muhammadeon-wa-rasuûlahû'* to witness the Oneness of God whereas he keeps the thumb and middle finger into a circle. Same position is adopted, when sitting in the Lotus, a yoga *mudra* that is termed to be meditation, which is made by forming the index finger and thumb into a circle.

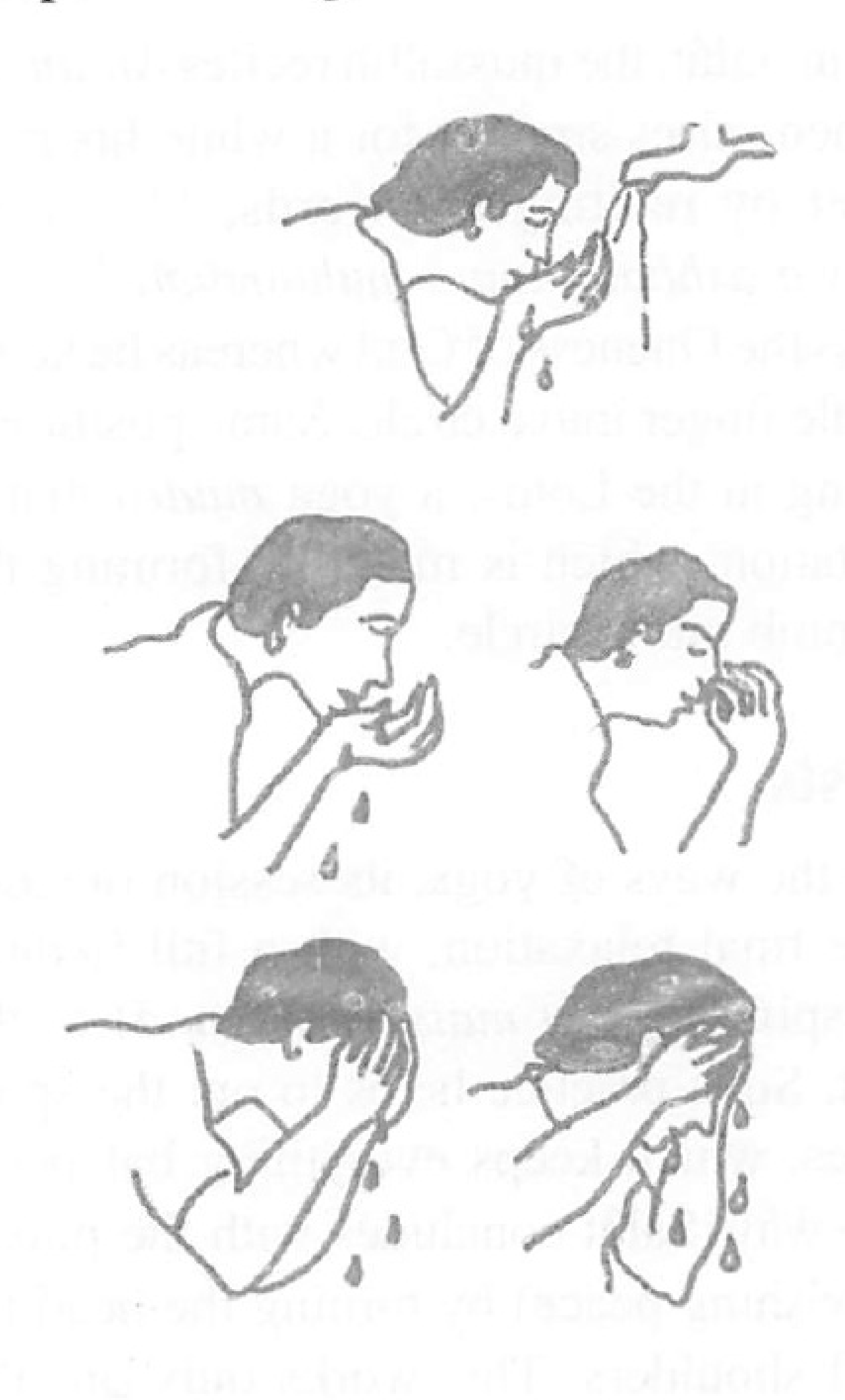
Spinal twists

According to the ways of yoga, its session practice usually ends before final relaxation, with a full-fledged twist of the entire spine (*ardha matsyendrâsana*) to the right and to the left. Such practice helps to out the spine from the other poses, which keeps everything balanced. Almost in the same way, Salât concludes with the prayer of reciting *Salâm* (wishing peace) by turning the head towards right and left shoulders. This works only on the cervical and probably a few of the thoracic vertebrae, but

it is beneficial for keeping the neck flexible and is consistent with the pattern in Salât of presenting reduced versions of the yoga *âsanas*. Repetition of such action helps in removing the pain causing in the area of shoulders and upper side of the back besides providing additional strength to it.

Breathing

Either it is yoga, religion of Islam or all the other medicinal principles—the great emphasis has been laid on proper breathing, which is done well in order to make one's body and mind more and more healthy. The relaxation and action of all the parts of the body, the stilling and concentration of the mind, the energizing of the whole being, and the access to the spiritual scope—all bank upon breathing of the individual. As the breathing and spirit are closely related to each-



others, in most of the languages these two words have the same meaning. The ultimate range of this meaning summarizes all the functions of the breath in yoga.

Islam gives more stress on proper and comfortable breathing as before offering the prayers, this religion has put the precondition of *wudhu* (ablution), in which nostrils have to be cleaned by throwing water into them and instantly letting it flow outside, which clears the nostrils enabling them easy to breath without any obstacle. Apart from it, when a mussallih recites the verses of the Holy Qur'an in performance of Salât, he stops at certain points and then starts recitation. Such procedure helps a lot in providing adequate oxygen into the body as this is done through proper breathing.

Moreover, when someone breathes usually, only two thirds of lung's capacity is exhaled and the rest of one third remain in the lung like a remnant air. But when a mussallih breathes in *sajidah* posture, then this one third residual air is aired out, that is very important for a healthy lung, because it minimizes the menace of lung diseases. Needless to say, the more performance of *sajidah* reduces the dangers of hernia and piles.

Meditation

Meditation in general applies to concentration of mind upon God and the act of being lost in remembrance of Him or it can well be defined as the act of having spiritual access to God. It generally comes through worship of Almighty as the meditation and worship are almost the same in nature.

In 23rd part of the 'Yoga Sutra', Patanjali acknowledges the attainment of spiritual cognizance through devotion to God (*isvara pranidhana*). The sutra is very concise and compact kind of literature. As Patanjali did not do much elaboration of it, some commentators assume that his concept of God is only a figurehead or self-conceived figure; and that's why it does not merit much importance in yoga practice. But the fact is, that nothing is beyond the truth as the one feature that identifies the metaphysics of the Yoga *darsana* from that of the Sankhya *darsana* of Kapila (a non-theistic analysis of the elements in the cosmos and consciousness) is the existence of God in Yoga. Such concept makes all the difference and makes Yoga in accordance with the religion of Islam.

However, as far as the concept of God held by Patanjali is concerned, he is found to be calling Him *Ishvara*. As per Hindu mythology, there is a pantheon of deities, who are worshipped like Supreme Being i.e. God, but the Sanskrit word, *'Ishvara'* denotes the only Supreme Being, Who is Omnipotent, Omniscient and has infinite powers. In Islam, God is recognized with the name of Arabic word, 'Allâh' as the first sentence of first *kalimah* of Islam says: *'La-Ilaha-Illallah'* (There is no god, but Allah).

Thus, Patanjali concept of universality of Godhood indicates that meditation in yoga is not confined to any polytheistic faith, but it is based on concentration of one God. In India, Yoga has been applied to a limitless varieties of different religious perspectives, and it works such as for other religions including Islam. There is not any specific type of yoga meant for Hinduism, Islam or other reli-

gions in the matter of its techniques and actions, but it assists the devotee in any kind of worship. Yoga is basically applied to concentration and stillness of mind; and when the concentration is made upon one God, the yogi gets access to the core of his religion and get spiritual solace as it is found while offering Salât.

Moreover, meditation (*trâTaka*) is a yogic technique performed to bring one's attention upon one point as it consists of fixing one's gaze on a single point. Thus, during the performance of Salât, the practice of *trâTaka* is observed by fixing the gaze pointedly at a place, where forehead is put to do the *sajidah*. While in *rukuh*, the *trâTaka* is directed at the point between both the big toes. The objective behind the execution of such action from yogic point of view is to centralize the attention on the prayer and keep it firm so that the gaze should not deviate from the fixed place. Thus, it helps a lot in getting the meditative state by ridding oneself from other painstaking and disturbing thoughts of the world.

In addition to that, in *sajidah* position, the mussalih is supposed to fix his gaze upon the point of his nose, which is very helpful to improve and maintain one's eyesight. Most of the eye specialists recommend to concentrate one's gaze upon the point of the nose or a finger repeatedly, which is considered to be a good exercise to improve the eyesight. It is so beneficial that sometimes it helps the persons (who use power-glasses) to reduce the power of the glass and sometimes relieve them from using power-glasses also, which are often utilized to attain adequate vision.

Cleanliness

Any sort of exercise and cleanliness are co-related; and the same is the case while performing prescribed actions of Yoga, which needs cleanliness of body and mind. It will be worthwhile to quote the conditions of Salât, performance of which needs purification with certain principles. And those are the Islamic obligations such as *ghusl* (bath in the case of being found unworthy to offer Salât) and *wudhu* (ablution).

Though there is some degrees of difference in the matter of getting oneself cleaned in these two activities i.e. Salât and Yoga, but they have one feature, that is common to both in using water to rinse the breathing passages as a yoga *kriya* (cleansing practice) called *jala neti* consists of pouring water into one's nostrils so that it flows through the sinuses and out through the other nostril. And this is done more systematically while performing ablution for the Salât or other Islamic obligations.

Yoga is a derivative form of Allâh's orders

When the physical movements and breathing in Islam are brought into discussion, there appears to be a number of similarities with yogic *âsanas*. So, it is beneficial for Muslims to learn yoga, because it is easy for them to execute the different movements required in it. And Salât helps in doing such exercise. As said earlier that lexical meaning of Salât is to bend the lower back, but this obligatory prayer of Islam got its perfect form after the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), when *rukuh, sajidah* and other postures with description of the words to be recited during its execution were explained to the people. However, when the Qur'anic verses (2:34; 7:11; 17:61; 18:50 and 20:116) are studied, it comes to knowledge that Almighty-Allâh ordered Iblîs to bow down in reverence to Adam (PBUH). But he disobeyed the Command of Allâh and was declared Satân.

It suggests that the movements executed in Salât were not the new ones, because they have got their inceptive sign right from the first human being of this world. This

clearly indicates that the sacred truths were revealed vertically from Heaven to all people. With the passage of time, a number of Allâh's messengers (Peace be upon them) ascended to this world and gave motivation to this prayer.

Thus, if we assume that yoga is the innovation of *Sanâtan dharma*, then again it is an undeniable and acceptable truth that all kinds of religions and faiths were introduced only after the advent of the first man of this earth—Prophet Adam (PBUH). And it is also a universal and transparent truth that right from the advent of Adam (PBUH) to Muhammad (S.A.W.)—all the prophets and messengers (Peace be upon them) of Allâh disseminated the faith of monotheism, which got completed in the form of Islam after the attainment of Prophethood by Muhammad (S.A.W.), the last Messenger of Allâh.

Thus, it can be well concluded that the roots of yoga are found in monotheistic belief; especially in Islam as most of the yogic movements are similar to those of Salât in Islam. Apart from them, meditation in yoga is also done by concentrating one's mind upon One God, Who is known as Allâh in the language of the Qur'an.

Medical Advantage of Salât-ul-Tarawîh

As said in earlier chapters that from the yogic point of view, mussallihs are benefited with the activities, executed in performance of Salât; and those start from ghusl, wudhu, Salât-Takbîr, qayâm, rukuh, sajidah, jalsah and taslîm etc. In the same way, from other medical point of views, they derive therapeutic and spiritual benefits by executing such things that also includes each and every movement performed in Salât. Five times—daily Salât and Salât-ul-Jumah are *fardh* (obligatory) prayers to be offered by each Muslim. Apart from them, there are some wajib, sunnah and nafil Salât, offering of which also draws the infinite graces of Allâh.

Salât-ul-Tarawîh is a sunnah prayer consisting (with variation) from 8 to 20 rakats, which is performed during the month of Ramadhan after Salât-ul-Isha. In this Salât, a break is taken for a while after completion of every four rakats; and this break is utilized for chanting and praising the sublimity of Allâh, the Exalted.

From the food, consumed in Iftâr the blood glucose level continues to rise; and just before Iftâr, the blood glu-

cose and insulin levels remain at their lowest level. But after the consumption of Iftâr meals i.e. after one hour or so on, the blood glucose starts rising with plasma insulin. Thus, the liver and muscles take up the circulating glucose. In such function, the blood sugar reaches high levels in one or two hours as the benefits of Salât-ul-Tarawîh start from there. And the circulating glucose gets metabolized into carbon dioxide and water during performance of this Salât. Thus, Salât-ul-Tarawîh proves to be a helpful prayer in expanding the extra calories and in improving flexibility, coordination by reducing stress-related autonomic responses in healthy people and becomes a factor to relieve depression and stress usually caused in daily life.

Physical and Spiritual benefits

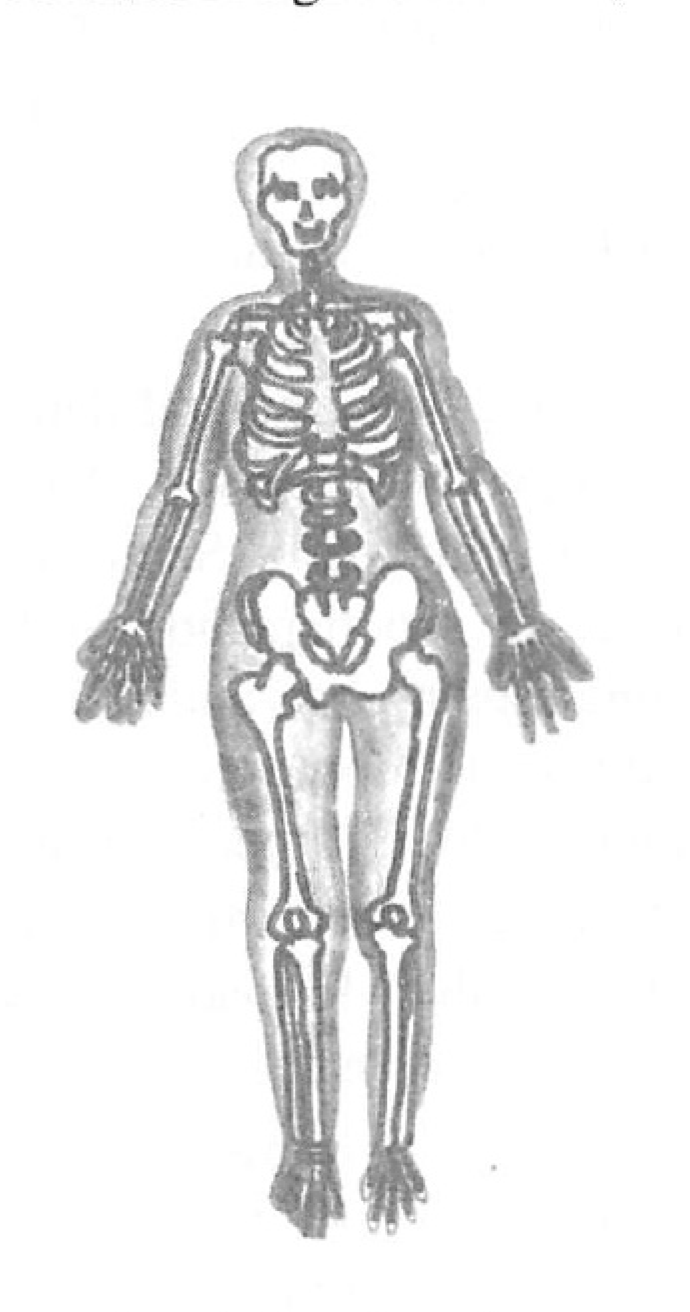
When a Muslim offers Salât-ul-Tarawîh, he simultaneously performs the gentle exercises as the movements done in this prayer are considered a gentle exercise beneficial to him from all the angles of life. The little extra effort put in performance of this Salât improves the endurance, stamina, flexibility and strength of the mussallih. It has been observed that the five times daily Salât produce the same physiological changes without any repulsive side-effects as those yielded by jogging or walking for around three miles per hour.

As per the specific research done on 17,000 students of Harvard university, who got admission in the college during 1916-1950, it evidently comes to knowledge that only the simple aerobic exercise equivalent to jogging for around three miles a day suffices to improve one's health

and there is possibility of longer life among the persons, who practise it. As described here, that offering of five times daily Salât is equivalent to performance of such amount of exercise. And Salât-ul-Tarawîh is an additional advantage in this regard.

Benefits for Skeletal Muscle

Besides being a great sunnah prayer, Salât-ul-Tarawîh is a good exercise, which improves endurance and brings down fatigue among the mussallihs. Usually, the flowing of blood into the resting muscle remains low. But during the performance of five times daily Salât and Salât-ul-Tarawîh, the flow of blood to the muscles increases adequately. Sometimes, the flow of blood increases even before offering Salât or Salât-ul-Tarawîh, which happens due to making up one's mind ready to initiate such prayer. While offering this Salât, systolic Blood Pressure may rise (the larger number in B.P) a little and the diastolic Blood Pressure (the lower number in B.P) may remain unchanged or even may fall also. And when the Salât-ul-Tarawîh gets completed by the mussallih, his B.P may come down to below



normal levels, which is medically considered a good sign for him.

Apart from this, Salât-ul-Tarawîh improves respiratory efficiency, circulation in the blood vessels surrounding the alveoli, or air sacs gets increased by enhancing proper gas exchange and deeper breathing. Resultantly, the increase in the maximal consumption of oxygen creates better feeling among the mussallih. This is also the reason that the punctual performers of Salât-ul-Tarawîh (besides offering five times daily Salât) are found to be more alert and active than those of performers of only five times Salât or others. This prayer provides more physical strength and joint stability by reducing the risk of injury to the connective tissues.

Usually, after the age of 40, the bone mineral density starts falling depending upon person to person. And this is the boon of Allâh that performance of Salât-ul-Tarawîh increases bone mineral density in both menopausal and old women besides preventing osteoporosis and maintaining normalcy in bone structures. Osteoporosis creates the danger of hip fractures among old and menopausal women. But it is Allâh's grace that regular performance of Salât and Salât-ul-Tarawîh in the month of Ramadhan reduces it and thus, such imminence is prevented.

Moreover, such prayers help in improvement of lubrication of joints, their movements and their flexibility. Not only this, punctual and regular offering of these prayers become a preventive weapon to deep vein thrombosis, which is a common factor of causing ulceration of the legs among the old people.

Metabolic Benefits

As far as obesity is concerned, regular offering of Salât and Salât-ul-Tarawîh help a lot in improving body weight control and expanding calories without proportionate increase in appetite. Generally, the restriction of consuming meals at the time of Saher and Iftâr along with performance of Salât-ul-Tarawîh help in reducing extra weight. It is especially better for fat persons (who want to get rid of obesity) to avoid overeating at the time of Saher and Iftâr and offer Salât-ul-Tarawîh.

The more Salât is offered, the more diseases are prevented, because it is not only a prayer in Islam, but a unique exercise preventing and curing many diseases, which are sometimes difficult to diagnose and cure. The maximum offering of Salât prevents coronary heart disease (CHD), increases high density lipo-proteins (HDL or healthy Cholesterol), enhances maximum oxygen intake, slows the heart, lowers the B.P slightly, decreases ventricular ectopic activity, enlarges the lumen of the coronary arteries and develops cardiac output. It also helps in improvement of carbohydrate tolerance and late-onset diabetes, and cures the cases of chronic respiratory diseases. Good health signs are found in the lipid profile, B.P clotting factors, weight reduction and insulin sensitivity of muscles and other tissues in persons, who offer Salât regularly.

Beneficial for Mental Health

As said in earlier chapters, when a Muslim offers Salât, each part of his body plays its different role in the

matter of its specific movement. And each movement is meant for regulating proper circulation of blood to the required parts of the body. When a mussallih prostrates (does the *sajidah*) to Allâh, the flow of blood increases towards his head by pumping fresh and adequate blood into his brain. And when brain gets its requirements fulfilled, automatically it gets envigoured. As the brain plays pivotal role in controlling the whole body, the individual attains the freshness of mind and his mental tiredness goes away. Moreover, this calm state of the mind may be partly on account of the release of encephalins, beta-endorphins (endogenous morphines) and others into the blood circulation. Endorphins are any one of the neuropeptides composed of many amino acids, elaborated by the pituitary gland and acting on the central and peripheral nervous systems to reduce pain.

While performing Salât, mussalih recites the applicable Qur'anic verses, repetition of which helps to protect the mind from incoming thoughts. According to the notion of Dr.Herbert Benson, a Harvard University researcher, that repetition of a prayer, verses of the Qur'an or enchanting Allâh's names or muscular activity along with passive disregard of intensive thoughts cause a relaxation response that leads to the lowering of B.P and decreases in oxygen consumption and a reduction in heart and respiratory rates. And all such activities are combined in Salât-ul-Tarawîh, which is an appropriate source to get the relaxation of one's mind.

Medical Advantage of Salât-ul-Tasbîh

Salât-ul-Tasbîh is a nafil (voluntary) prayer, for which a tradition is on, that it should be observed daily; if not daily, then at least once a week; if it is not feasible, then at least once a month; if it is not under feasibility to perform once a month; then at least it should be offered once a year; and if a Muslim could not offer it once a year; then it should at least be offered once in life.

Though it is a four rakats nafil prayer, but it has been considered a great source to eliminate one's sins. The third *kalimah* of Islam i.e. '*subhanallahe-wa'alhamdullillah-wallahilaha-illallaho-wallah-u-akbar*' is recited totally 300 times during performance of Salât-ul-Tasbîh. To complete the total number of *kalimah* (300 times), this *kalimah* is recited 10 or 15 times in each position of Salât-ul-Tasbîh, which goes on according to the counting, easy for the mussallih. As more perseverance is required in it; and it takes much time almost in all the positions, it (Salât-ul-Tasbîh) brings more medical and spiritual benefits than other prayers.

As far as medical benefits of Salât-ul-Tasbîh is concerned, the same kinds of benefits are gained by this prayer as they are attained by performing five times daily Salât and Salât-ul-Tarawîh. But the degree of benefits are more than those of other Salâts, because the mussallih in performance of Salât-ul-Tasbîh, puts much time in different positions and recites the *surahs* (Qur'anic verses) in addition to the third *kalimah* of Islam. It is evident from all the positions of the Salât-ul-Tasbîh as the mussallih recites the *kalimah*10 or 15 times in each position of this Salât, which adds around 2-3 minutes in each position enhancing more flow of blood circulation to the required part of the body (especially towards the head when he/she perform *sajidah*) and concentrating upon Allâh more deeply by forgetting each and every worldly thing, which causes disturbance when individual is not in the state of performing Salât.

Medical Advantage of Salât-ul-Tahajjud

This is a nafil Salât, performed in the midnight or just before starting time of Salât-ul-Fajr (dawn prayer). It's merits are worthy especially in the matter of acceptance of one's *duas* (supplications made to Allâh for fulfillment of something needed or wished by the mussallih). It can be offered consisting of 4 to 12 rakats.

The medical benefits of Salât-ul-Tahajjud are almost the same as they are found in other Salâts,

but there is a little difference in the degree of its benefits. And that is because of its being observed in the midnight, when most of the people remain in sound slumber; there is found to be complete peace of environment. That is in fact, the time of pin-drop silence, which is the most suitable time to establish spiritual relationship with Allâh and meditate in the best way. The mussallih concentrates himself/herself more upon Almighty—Allâh, the more he/she gets yogic and medical benefits of this Salât.

Some Fardh and Sunnah Preconditions of Salât

Before offering Salât, some preconditions have been stipulated, which must be observed by the person, who is going to offer Salât. There are two types of preconditions i.e. Fardh and Sunnah. Fardh is the obligatory ones, that have to be observed by the mussallih; and sunnah is also necessary, but there is a little relaxation and flexibility according to the conditions of the mussallih and situation of the environment. However, such types of preconditions or activities are described here, which are applicable before offering Salât.

Ghusl (Bath)

Physical and spiritual purification merit paramount importance specially in the matter of performing Islamic prayers. Allâh, the Exalted in the Holy Qur'an says:

> *"O ye who believe ! Approach not prayers With a mind befogged. Until ye can understand All that ye say, -Nor in a state Of ceremonial impurity (Except when travelling on the road), Until after washing Your whole body. If ye are ill, Or on a journey, Or one of you cometh From offices of nature, Or he have been In contact with women, And ye find no*

water, Then take for yourselves Clean sand or earth. And rub therewith Your faces and hands: For Allah doth blot out sins And forgive again and again"
(4:43)

Ghusl (bath) becomes fardh (compulsory) in the conditions described in the above verse. But in case of non-availability of water, dry soil or sand as mentioned above can also be used to clean oneself. However, in the light of above; and some other conditions are given here below, when ghusl becomes fardh for a Muslim:

- *If individual has done sexual intercourse or sexual organs of the couple get in touch with each-others.*
- *In the case of bed-wetting.*
- *After completion of menopausal period.*
- *If some filth (especially in the liquid form) got splashed/sticked on the clothes or any part of the body; and all the spots of that filth come equivalent to the size of a normal size of a coin; then ghusl becomes fardh on individual.*
- *If got touched by dirty animals such as pigs and wet dogs etc.*
- *In the case of falling sick and during travelling, when it becomes difficult to maintain tahârah (sacred cleanliness) of body.*

As far as the benefits of ghusl from medical points of view are concerned, it (ghusl) is not only vital to perform religious obligations, but it is also essential for maintenance of health. While taking the bath, it must be observed that not even the single portion of the body equivalent even to the size of a hair should be untouched by the flow of water. When bath is taken, all the dirt and filth, which consist with fathomless harmful germs are washed

away from the body. The blockade of secretion glands (consisting numerous narrow holes on human body, which are



also the points of growing hairs on them), which often causes due to dirt on them is cleaned by the flow and rinsing of water. In hot summer, when body starts sweating—the secretion of this perspiration is better for the skin, but if it's drops, that dwell on human body are not washed away, they may then become the reason of some skin irritations and different types of scratching problems may arise.

So, ghusl helps in removing such types of filth and prevents from many diseases, usually caught by dirt and perspiration on the body. Besides, it gives freshness to body and mind enabling the person to perform his/her activities (either worldly or spiritual) comfortably and smoothly.

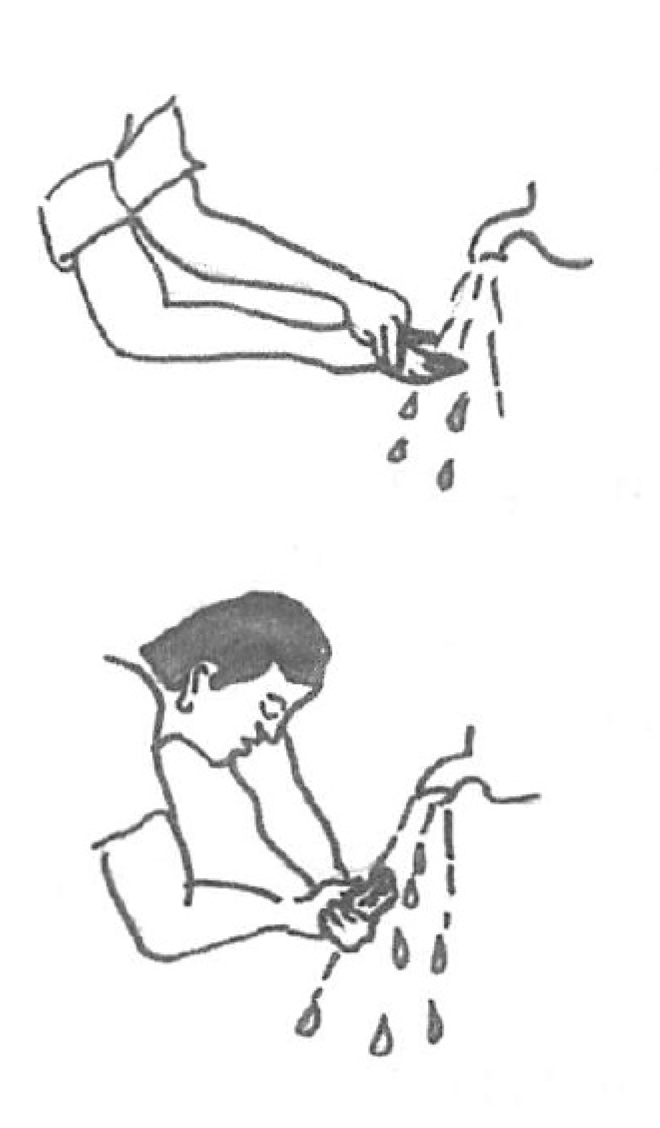
Wudhu (ablution)

As described earlier that performance of Wudhu is one of the fardh preconditions of Salât. Moreover, there are certain conditions in performance of wudhu. Allâh, the Exalted in the Holy Qur'an says:

"O ye who believe! When ye prepare For Prayer, wash Your faces, and your hands (And arms) to the elbows: Rub your heads (with water) And (wash)

your feet To the ankles. If ye are in a state Of ceremonial impurity, Bathe your whole body. But if ye are ill, Or on a journey, Or one of you cometh From offices of nature, Or ye have been In contact with women, And ye find no water Then take for yourselves Clean sand or earth, And rub therewith Your faces and hands. Allah doth not wish To place you in a difficulty. But to make you clean, And to complete His favour to you, That ye may be greateful" *(5:6)*

Alike the conditions of ghusl, there is also the alternative of doing *tayyamum* (using soil and sand) in the case of non-availability of water. However, in order to perform this Islamic obligation, individual is supposed to wash his/her hands from palms to elbows; legs from toes to below the knees; the entire face and do the *masah* i.e. forwarding one's hands towards the upper side of head and backside of the neck by moving the specific fingers around the ears also. As far as the washing of different parts of the body is concerned, this is performed



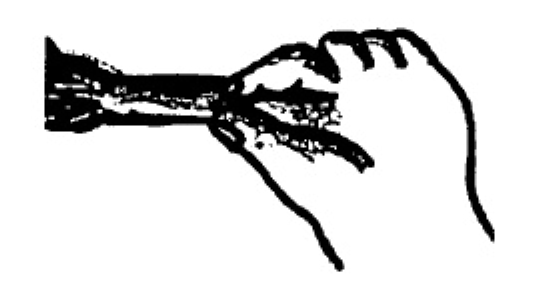
at least for three times.

Performance of Meswak i.e. brushing the teeth and gum with a twig of an applicable tree (using of which should not be forbidden in Islam) or by index finger of right hand (if such types of things are not available) can be used by gurgling and throwing the water at least three times from the mouth, which is also obligatory as it cleans the teeth and mouth. Giving water into the nostrils and getting it back is also obligatory for three times. It helps in cleaning the nostrils enabling the person to breath comfortably, because it removes the dirt found inside the nostrils.

As said that bath washes away the dirt and filth of the body, the performance of wudhu for at least five times a day is proved to be the best habit to remove various germs and filth from the body, which besides enabling a person to perform religious obligations, also makes him/her fresh and active in all respects.

Meswak (Cleansing the teeth)

Meswak is also a part of sunnah preconditions observed for performance of Salât. Though it has great advantage in the sights of Allâh and His Prophet (S.A.W.), but it is not brought into the status of such preconditions, leaving of which makes the individual unable to perform Salât.



However, the Prophet (S.A.W.) has laid more emphasis on meswak besides doing it at the time of wudhu as he said:

"Meswak increases the thawab (reward) of Salât from seventy times to four hundred times."

(Hadith)

In today's world, especially among the urban population, all the people start their days (in the morning) by cleaning their teeth and mouth; and this is done only by cleaning the teeth (with a tooth-brush) or by using normally index finger by applying some readymade tooth paste or powder, which are actually the innovations of modern world. But doing meswak by the twig of a tree is still the best thing for teeth and gum, because it has got multi-purpose medical and spiritual advantage.

It has been exhorted by the Prophet (S.A.W.) that a Muslim should do meswak while performing wudhu and make it a habit by repeating the same at most of the times. It has got a lot of benefits for health. Gum and teeth are the grinding machines of all living creatures. As far as these two essential parts of human body are concerned, it is incumbent upon each individual to maintain them to the best of the requirement. And Islam has taught the best way of their maintenance, that is done by meswak. It is a sunnah activity as doing meswak results in blessing of Allâh's graces also.

Whatever a person eats, he chews it first and then swallows it into his belly. While swallowing inside, some of remnants of the food (in the form of small particles) get stick to his teeth or around the gum. If this is not cleaned properly, these particles get rotted by forming cavity in it, that is very harmful and painful for the gum and the teeth. Sometimes, it results in horrible dental diseases. Besides, the wisdom underlying the use of the meswak after rising

from sleep is that during sleep bad vapours rise from the stomach towards the mouth. This causes bad odour in the mouth as well as a change in the sense of taste. Use of the meswak eliminates the bad odour and rectifies the change, that occurs in the taste.

Hence, to prevent such menaces, it is the duty of each individual to clean it frequently and properly. If it is cleaned by doing meswak i.e. by using a specific wooden twig generally used for this purpose, it is proved more effective, because it is a natural thing without any alteration and addition of chemicals i.e. usually done with toothpaste and toothpowder. Regular doing of meswak cleans the harmful particles from the teeth and massage the gum enhancing appropriate circulation of blood into it. Massage of gum is also required as it helps in adequate circulation of blood into it. All such beneficial things are done by meswak, which is strongly advised by the Prophet (S.A.W.) especially before offering Salât and getting up from the bed.

Apart from the above mentioned advantages, there are so many other medical benefits of meswak, performing of which do the following:

- *Sharpens the memory*
- *Sharpens the intelligence.*
- *Eliminates slime.*
- *Creates fragrance in the mouth.*
- *Prevents further increase of decay, which has already set in the teeth.*
- *Prevents headache.*
- *Eliminates toothache.*

- *Brings glaze on the face of the person, who continuously do it.*
- *Removes the yellowishness of the teeth.*
- *Strengthens the eye-sight.*
- *Improves digestion.*
- *Clears the voice, which is described in Tibbe Nabawi.*
- *Develops the eloquence of speech.*

Removal of Pubic Hairs

Removal of pubic hairs is also an essence of individual health and Islamic obligation. Islam has fixed a maximum period of 40 days, within which the pubic hairs must be removed, otherwise, Salât or other Islamic rituals performed by such individual (who has not removed the concerned dirty hairs) will become *makrooh*. If the frequency of such removal is increased, then it is better for sex organs also. Frequent removal of pubic hairs by plucking or by the use of razor also helps in appropriate circulation of blood into this part. Moreover, there are several types of germs, which start dwelling at the hairy parts causing different skin and other diseases.

Hairs, grown on and around the armpits for more than the period of 40 days also make the prayer *makrooh*. Moreover, such hairs spread the bad odour, which becomes a reason of ill-feeling of the people, who pass through or stand near the person, who does not remove them. So, with the removal of such dirty hairs, the harmful germs also get removed by giving a comfortable and fresh feeling to the individual as it gives more firmness in the prayers.

Istinjah
(cleaning the private parts after the call of nature)

According to a Hadith, as said in the introduction of this book that cleanliness is half of Imân. Ghusl, wudhu, and meswak etc. are the ways to keep oneself clean. Apart from them, one of the most important aspects is Istinjah, which is performed after passing urine or defecation.

When a Muslim passes urine, he must wash it because it is a dirty liquid; and is known as uric acid in the world of chemical science. This is a harmful acid. So, it must be washed away as soon as the urination is over. If water is not available, the dry soil or sand can be used to clean it. Same is the case with defecation. In case of non-availability of water, the dry soil, sand and tissue papers can be brought into use, but it must be washed as soon as water is accessed.

If a Muslim does not take istinjah after passing urine, he will not only be the loser from medical point of view, but also be punished by Allâh after the death. The Messenger of Allâh (S.A.W.) said:

> ***"He will be the worst sufferer in his grave, who does not take istinja after passing the urine".***
>
> *(Hadith)*

Those, who do not take istinja, cannot perform any Islamic prayer until he washes it, takes ghusl as per Islamic way and perform wudhu. It is also to be noted that Istinja and ghusl becomes mandatory after establishing sexual relationship.

Circumcision

Circumcision is a kind of surgery, in which the upper part of skin that covers the end of the penis is removed. This is a sunnah precondition of Islamic prayer. Some Islamic scholars have considered it obligatory in Islam. Though the Salât of uncircumcised Muslim can also be accepted by Allâh, but the Salât performed in such condition will be *makrooh*. So, it is better for an uncircumcised Muslim to get himself circumcised as soon as possible. This prevents the dirt from getting on one's penis, and also makes it easy to keep it clean so that the harmful germs cannot dwell at this part. Moreover, circumcision is proved to be most effective way to prevent cervical cancer.

It will be worthwhile to describe that a large number of Westerners are now opting for male circumcision. *The Guardian*, as quoted by the Malaysian newspaper *New Straits Times* of September 8, 1991, reported evidence given by American urologist, Aaron J.Fink that uncircumcised men are at a greater risk not only of contracting AIDS, but also cancer of the penis, herpes, and syphilis. Moreover, wives of circumcised men are found to be at least risk of cervical cancer, which is a very rare disease among Muslim women.

The Guardian stated that many Britons ask for circumcision, because their wives and partners complain that "they do not wash properly" causing them to develop various infections. Of relevance to this issue is the poll carried out in Britain by Research Associates on 1,000 adults and reported by Reuters in June 1995. The results showed that 1 in 10 British men do not change their underpants for 3 days while 1 in 100 continue wearing them for a week. Also, one in 4 of the sample confessed to

regularly going without a bath or a shower for 3 days. This would certainly be much more harmful to uncircumcised men in more humid and warm countries.

Circumcision was initiated before the advent of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) as such knowledge is attained through the concerned Hadith. Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allâh (S.A.W.) said, "Ibrahîm circumcised himself after completing the age of eighty years." (Related by al-Bukhari). It indicates the importance and vitality of circumcision that Prophet Ibrahîm (PBUH) got himself circumcised in such an old age. It was only aimed at attaining Allâh's pleasure and to maintain multi-purpose hygiene.

Now, due to praiseworthy development in the field of medication and surgery, circumcision has become very easy to get it done be in bless with medical benefits.

Conclusion

In today's world, there would hardly be any person, who would have not have any kind of physical or mental problem either it is of serious nature or of very light one. Depression, obesity, sexual diseases and body-ache are very common problems found in several people all around the world. Depression is one of the most serious problems in the twentieth century especially in the Western world as we are frequented with the news of millionaires committing suicide. Such cases are of millions of the people, who live on sedatives in order to sustain their daily life. The reason of suicidal is not the common hackneyed causes such as poverty or ignorance, because people in Western countries enjoy easy living and a high standard of education. Several researches have been done on its causes. They may be diagnosed as prevalent materialism and lack of spiritual and religious awareness, lack of moral impulse and religious restraint, lack of sympathy and cooperation in modern society, excess of luxury and deliberate ignorance of God in the matter of prostration made in His reverence. Such people do the physical exercise, but hardly do meditation to have spiritual pleasure.

The best way of meditation is religion; and Islam has been found an ideal religion in the matter of meditation performed by concentrating one's mind upon Allâh. Islamic

society is the only one, in which religious affairs are closely bound to the worldly ones, and to the life with the Hereafter. Thus, if Islamic principles are properly applied in present time with proper understanding and wisdom, all the reasons of depression will automatically be uprooted.

As far as other health problems are concerned, there are a class of people, who are free from diseases or have very little health problems. But such people are less in numbers. Most of the sufferers at global level are found among those, who do not take health precautions and deliberately ignore personal hygiene and physical exercise. These two health-attributable factors are found in some specific exercises such as yoga, jogging, swimming and walking etc. However, when Salât in Islam is brought into contemplation and practice, it appears that this Islamic prayer has got all the potentialities, majority of which are found in the movements of yoga and other physical exercises.

After going through each aspects of Salât and its fardh as well as sunnah preconditions, it comes to knowledge that this is actually the most effective weapon in the form of Islamic prayer, which not only prevents many imminent dangers and diseases, but also cures them if they are caused. Its resemblance with yogic movements and similarities with those of medications in the form of physical exercises prove that the punctual and regular mussallihs in comparison with the common people (who do not perform Salât or not found regular in this regard) are mostly found more alert, active and free from depressions and common diseases.

Right from the time, when yoga and other kinds of

medication came into existence—all the theories laid emphasis on personal cleanliness, hygiene, food and exercise, because these are the factors to prevent any sort of impending disease and sickness. And it is the significance of Islam that this religion has got certain rules and regulations in the form of specific prayers, which simultaneously cover all these health-attributable factors besides providing spiritual pleasure and blessings of Allâh.

There is the fathomless depth in Salât, which is difficult for mankind to gauge from medical as well as spiritual points of views. People simply fulfill certain preconditions of Salât, perform it and forget about it. But the team of Islamic researchers are not sitting idle. They are devoted to Islamic studies in comparison with medical, physical and chemical science. Of course, we need some historical proofs to understand the yogic and medical benefits of Salât as it is proved that prostration or bowing down in reverence is the innovation of the time, when the first human being, Adam (PBUH) came on this earth.

By this, it becomes obvious that all the beneficial movements and health-attributable activities as found in performance of yoga and other medications have got their roots in Salât, which is the most beloved prayer in the sights of Allâh and His Messenger (S.A.W.).